

# Wildlife Diversity News

*A Publication of the Iowa DNR Wildlife Diversity Program*

## Two Iowa Prairie Skippers Proposed for Listing Under the Endangered Species Act

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Poweshiek Skipper. Photo: Mike Reese

On October 23rd, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) announced their proposal of the Poweshiek Skipperling (*Oarisma poweshiek*) for Endangered status and the Dakota Skipper (*Hesperia dacotae*) for Threatened status under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Both species are tightly associated with native prairie and, as such, have declined significantly as remnant prairie has been destroyed.

The Poweshiek Skipperling was first identified in Iowa and was named after the area in which it was discovered in 1870 – Poweshiek County. Since 1920, however, the species has mostly been found on remnant prairies in the northern two tiers of Iowa's counties. The Poweshiek has been state listed in Iowa since 1988, first as special concern and then later as threatened, but its most precipitous decline in Iowa and range-wide has occurred in the last 15 years. The cause of this rapid decline is not known.

The USFWS has proposed 11 properties in Iowa spread over 6 counties (Howard, Cerro Gordo, Dickinson, Osceola, Kossuth, Emmet) as critical habitat for the Poweshiek Skipperling.

In the past 80 years, the Dakota skipper has only been found at one location in Iowa; Cayler Prairie. It has not been observed at this site since 1980 and was listed as endangered at the state level in 1984. Because it is likely extirpated from Iowa, the USFWS is not proposing to designate any critical habitat for this species in the state.

Both of these species are part of Iowa's prairie heritage. It is never cause for celebration when a species is listed under the ESA, but hopefully a critical status for these two butterflies will help them and their native prairie habitat recover. To learn more about the proposed listing you can visit the FWS website:

[http://www.fws.gov/midwest/endangered/insects/dask/dask\\_poskPropListCH24Oct2013.html](http://www.fws.gov/midwest/endangered/insects/dask/dask_poskPropListCH24Oct2013.html).



Dakota Skipper.  
Photo: Dennis Skadsen

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- Stephanie Shepherd,  
WDP Biologist

## Please Keep Your Cats Indoors



About two weeks ago, while I was sitting in the woods enjoying a lovely fall day, I witnessed some animal behavior I had not seen before. A yearling buck came running up a path from the creek below. Right behind him was a very large coyote in close pursuit. A short while later I watched a doe trotting down the path toward the creek. Following a few feet behind that deer was a very large yellow cat. While a coyote chasing a full-grown deer is probably a bit unusual, a domestic cat chasing a deer really does not make sense at all. I found out later that the cat I observed belonged to some folks who lived about one-half mile from where I observed the animal. I suspect this “pet”

cat was doing what cats naturally do – hunting – and perhaps the deer moving down the trail inspired the cat to tag along. Watching that cat so far from its home made me wonder – what exactly was this kitty preying on? So I looked into that.

I suspect that most people are not aware of how many wild animals their typically mild-mannered tabby actually kills each year when it is allowed to freely roam outdoors. Even though cats are a non-native species in North America, they are instinctive and efficient predators. One study found that an individual cat can kill as many as 1,000 wild animals per year. A recent study in Canada looked at more than 25 human-caused sources of bird mortality. The study found that domestic cats, both feral and owned, are the leading human-related cause of bird death in the country. In total, five to 10 million outdoor cats are estimated to kill between 100 million and 350 million birds per year in Canada. These estimates indicate that from two to seven percent of all southern Canadian birds are killed by cats each year. Over 400 species of birds nest in Canada, and many of these species are vulnerable to cat predation. Those species that feed or nest on or close to the ground, like thrushes and Ovenbirds, may be most impacted.

This study in Canada supports conclusions reached from recent research conducted in the United States. Scientists from the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service found that an estimated 114 to 164 million feral and “pet” outdoor cats in the United States are responsible for the deaths of 1.4 to 3.7 billion birds and 6.9 to 20.7 billion mammals every year. Studies have shown that even the mere presence of cats outdoors tends to reduce birds’ ability to reproduce and survive.

Another concern about outdoor cats is that they can harbor a number of diseases. Among domestic animals, cats are the number one carrier of rabies. They also are the host of the parasite that causes toxoplasmosis, which has been linked to a number of neurodegenerative diseases, and can cause sudden abortion and fetal abnormalities in pregnant mothers.

Unfortunately, the number of cats in the United States continues to grow – almost exponentially. There were an estimated 30 million cats in the U.S. in 1970, 60 million in 1990, and at least 114 million today. So if you value birds and other small animals, please keep your cat indoors. If you feel your cat must be outdoors, consider using a fenced enclosure. Such confinement can save the lives of hundreds of birds and other wild animals each year, and you might be surprised to see how many more birds are in your yard when the cat is not!

- Bruce Ehresman,  
WDP Biologist

## Species Spotlight— Wood Turtle

The Wood Turtle (*Clemmys insculpta*) is a very rare species in Iowa. Found only in a few drainages in the northern part of the state, Wood Turtles spend time in both water and on land during their life cycle. They are quite a handsome and unique turtle as they have bright yellow legs with large dark scales, plus their bellies have a pattern of dark blotches with bright yellow scutes. Their name comes from the very “wood-like” texture of the carapace. When not covered in algae or mud, their shells look like they are carved out of wood!

Wood Turtles are found along small to medium-sized sand or gravel-bottomed streams with high quality riparian zones. Typical habitat along these streams consists of wooded or shrubby cover interspersed with pasture or grassy openings. Wood Turtles spend time basking and breeding in or near the water, and forage on land for a variety of invertebrates, berries, mushrooms, and plant material. They often forage in open, sun-lit areas in or near woodlands that harbor food plants like blackberry, strawberry, and violet. Some Wood Turtles have developed an unusual feeding habit called “worm stomping” where they stomp the ground and the subsequent vibrations induce earthworms to come to the surface where they are eaten by the turtle! Wood Turtles certainly aren’t your average turtle, as they are reported to have a well-developed homing ability and can navigate mazes as well as rats!

Wood Turtles hibernate in streams by wedging themselves into submerged snags and debris piles. They nest along sand and gravel ridges found on the inside bends of streams, usually choosing sites just above the high water mark. Unfortunately, abnormally high flood waters can decimate a nesting ridge and wash hibernating turtles downstream. Predators of adult wood turtles include raccoons and coyotes, while nest or juvenile turtle predators include raccoon, skunk, opossum, dog, cat, and various birds. Humans remain a significant problem with our constant habitat degradation and destruction, in addition to continued illegal collection of turtles from the wild.

Unfortunately, wood turtles are considered endangered in Iowa and many other states. They are a long-lived species that requires high quality habitat to thrive. In our modern society, wood turtle populations are constantly bombarded by artificially high nest predator populations, abnormal flooding events, continuous

habitat degradation, and over-collection. They struggle to maintain their numbers, especially within the highly modified landscape of our state. We need to learn more about wood turtles in Iowa and we would greatly appreciate any wood turtle records with an accompanying photograph. Please contact the Wildlife Diversity Program at 515-432-2823 if you have information about a wood turtle in our state.



Wood Turtle. Photo: Paul Frese

-Paul Frese,  
WDP Technician



## 2013 MSIM Season Wraps Up

We recently completed the 2013 season of the Multiple Species Inventory and Monitoring Project. While working on the MSIM project, crews are tasked with learning a variety of survey protocols, species identification, equipment use, and data documentation methods, all while working long hours in often poor environmental conditions. We began the year with dry conditions in much of the state, snowstorms and freezing temps in early May, followed by torrential rains in much of the state. In spite of this, the hard-working crews tallied an impressive list of species for each area, including many species of greatest conservation need (SGCN).

The Riverton crew, consisting of Brent Rutter, Ashley Messina, Pierce Holland, Shane Weinberg, Caitlin Thomas, and Alyssa DeRubeis worked in Fremont, Mills, Montgomery, Page, Ringgold, Taylor, and Monroe counties. Their travels found them in Missouri River bottomlands, Loess Hills woodlands, and rolling farm country where they found notable species like the Plains Spadefoot Toad, Prairie Racerunner, and Bullsnake.



Graham's Crayfish Snake. Photo: Kevin Haupt

The Missouri Valley crew spent time in Pottawattamie, Harrison, Sac, Ringgold, Decatur and Guthrie counties. This crew, made up of Laura Helmich, Katrina Lukianchuk, Kenny Wailes, Kimberly Forrest, and Alaina Maiers, surveyed a variety of habitat types, from oak/hickory woodland to bottomland forest to prairie potholes. Some interesting finds this year were the Blanding's Turtle, Bullsnake, and an up close and personal Bobcat encounter.



Joe Lambert checks a turtle trap. Photo : Paul Frese.

The Northwest crew worked in Dickinson, Emmet, Clay, Palo Alto, and O'Brien counties. Erica Eaves, Jacob Newton, Valerie Van Quill, and Christian Kelley were part of the Northwest crew. They surveyed a variety of grasslands, marshes, and riparian areas and found many fascinating species such as the Ermine, Clay-colored Sparrow, and Vesper Bluet.

*(Continued )*

## MSIM, continued from page 4

The Big Marsh crew worked in Butler, Franklin, Cerro Gordo, Floyd, Allamakee, Wright, Tama, and Jasper counties. Sam Wetter, Ryan Wilcke, Jordan Lindaman, Kaitlin Alford, Brooke Webb, and Nick Johnson made up the crew. Many of their sites were bottomland woodlands, which were flooded much of the spring. Even with the difficult conditions, they found some great stuff including the Central Newt, Wood Turtle, Smooth Green Snake and Timber Rattlesnake, which are all SGCN animals.

The Dubuque crew traversed Dubuque, Delaware, Jackson, Jones, Clinton, Muscatine, and Johnson counties, where they worked in mostly woodland or marsh habitats. Jeremy Rappaport, Kate Harvey, Eric Powell, Kinsey Edmonds, Brittany Schultz, and Stephen Harris joined the Dubuque crew and found several cool species such as the Black Rat Snake, Smooth Green Snake, and Meadow Jumping Mouse.

The Saylorville crew was staffed by Matt Stephenson, Emily Kiefer, Megan Waechter, Erin Johnson, Rachel Simmons, and Austin Lambert. They worked primarily within the Des Moines River Valley along the Saylorville Wildlife Management Area and public lands adjacent to Saylorville Reservoir. They documented several new species for the area, including the Spangled Skimmer dragonfly, Smooth Earth Snake, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher and Yellow-bellied Racer.

Julia Dale and Holly Howard endured heavy flooding at Port Louisa National Wildlife Refuge while trying to complete their surveys this season. Amidst all the water they found several interesting species, such as the Copper-belly Water Snake, Black-necked Stilt, and Diamondback Water Snake.

When crews needed extra help, Joe Lambert, Kevin Murphy, and Danny Stark spent many hours assisting where they were needed most.

With another successful season behind us, we look forward to the upcoming season, as planning never ceases. We greatly appreciate the cooperation and access from Iowa landowners, such as the County Conservation Boards, State Parks, Army Corp of Engineers, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, private landowners, and the IDNR Forestry and Wildlife Bureaus. Each year we look forward to partnering with Iowa's landowners so we can learn more about Iowa's wildlife species and the habitat they require.

*-Paul Frese,  
WDP Technician*



**22% of the original purchase price and 60% of the renewal fee for natural resource license plates go directly to the Wildlife Diversity Program.**



## Diversity Dispatch

### Breaking News From the World of Wildlife

#### Rare Species Captured on Camera

A camera trap set up in Vietnam by the World Wildlife fund has caught footage of an animal that has not been seen in 15 years. The Saola is one of the most elusive mammals on earth, and was only discovered in 1992. This is an understandably difficult animal to study, and biologists are hoping that the new photos will help advance conservation efforts.



Photo: WWF

<http://www.ksdk.com/story/news/2013/11/14/asian-unicorn-saola-vietnam/3524741/>

#### USFWS Crushes Ivory Stockpile

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service has crushed a six-ton stockpile of confiscated ivory. The destruction was intended to send a message that the poaching of elephants will not be tolerated. The stockpile included whole Elephant tusks, as well as many smaller decorative pieces. Each piece had been seized as part of investigations into poaching and was kept after cases were finished as tools to educate the public and conservation professionals on the illegal ivory trade. Initial concerns that the destruction could drive up the demand for ivory were ruled out due to the fact that the ivory would never have been available for purchase or sale. The Fish and Wildlife Service plans to work with zoos to find a new, educational use for the pulverized ivory.

<http://www.nbcnews.com/id/53520892>



#### Federal Plan Aims to Restore California Coastal Wetlands

A major plan to restore one of California's most vulnerable ecosystems has been introduced. The plan recommends projects along 500 miles of coastline to restore tidal marshes, which provide important habitat for a number of species, including the California clapper rail, an endangered species. While not legally binding, the plan is based on over a decade of research and will be applied on both public and private land along the central and northern coast of the state, including the heavily developed San Francisco Bay area.

<http://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/feds-unveil-50-year-plan-wetlands-restoration-20893049>

Salt evaporation ponds like these are part of a massive restoration plan in California. Photo: NASA

## Peregrines Continue to Thrive in Iowa

Spring 2013 came late as conditions were very wet and cold. There was even snow in the northern half of the state on May 3. Despite the weather, there were 15 Peregrine territories with 13 successful nests producing 31 young.

This year, two young were produced at the American Enterprise building (which has fledged 51 young since '93) by male 63/B (from Woodman Tower, Omaha, NE. 2004) and female 39/E. A second territory established by male 39/A at the capitol building (11 young since 2008) produced three young above the east portico. Unfortunately, the male was killed, so there will likely be a replacement male at this site in 2014.



In Cedar Rapids, a brood of three young was reported by Theresa Chapel at US Bank (63 young since '93). Female S/5 (fledged from Des Moines in 1998) has produced 38 young at this site over 15 years, nine of those years with male 78/E from Kokomo, Indiana. An unidentified pair produced three young at Aggie's Bluff two miles upstream from Lansing. This is their second year at this site and they have produced seven young so far. A report from Bob Anderson indicated that another falcon pair using the Alliant Energy nest box at Lansing cliff produced three fledglings this year. Bob also reported that the pair that previously nested at Waukon Jct. (female \*K/\*W from MN and an unbanded male) relocated back to Leo's Bluff, but the nest was unsuccessful. However, Bob notes that an unidentified falcon pair successfully fledged three young at the Bunge America Elevator in MacGregor.

At the Wisconsin Bridge in Dubuque, a report from Roger Scholberg notes that an unidentified pair, here for fourth year, had no activity due to bridge maintenance. However, another unidentified falcon pair in Clinton fledged three young at the ML Kapp Generating Station. Another Peregrine territory in Clinton, held by female 35/M and male 83/M, produced two fledglings this year. Interestingly, this area is at the southern extent of the historic Peregrine nesting range along the Mississippi flyway in Iowa.

The same fourteen-year-old pair that has been at the MidAmerican HQ (22 young since '02) in the Quad Cities for 12 years laid four eggs in their nest box, although only one young fledged. At the Louisa Generating Station (33 young since '02) a report from Jim Haack indicated that three young were successfully fledged by female 06/A (St. Louis, MO. '05) and an unidentified male. This was the pair's twelfth year at the territory. An unidentified pair at the Great River Bridge in Burlington fledged one young. Another pair, female b/g N23 and male b/r B26, successfully fledged two young at the Ottumwa Generating Station in Chillicothe.

For an opportunity to see Peregrine Falcons in their historic habitat along the beautiful bluffs of the Mississippi River, stay tuned for further details in upcoming newsletters about the "Falcon River Trip", planned for May 2-3 at Harper's Ferry in NE Iowa.

-Pat Schlarbaum,

WDP Technician

## Successful Breeding Season for Ospreys



ALLETE crew at Osprey nest. Photo: ALLETE staff

Thanks to the concerted efforts of volunteers throughout Iowa, the state had 18 Osprey nest attempts with 14 successful nests producing 28 young in 2013. This is an amazing feat that showcases the progress made since Osprey nesting first occurred in Iowa in 2003 at Spirit Lake and Lake Macbride. The reintroduction began when Macbride Raptor Projected spear-headed Osprey releases near Coralville Reservoir in 1997.

This year, ALLETE Power of Minnesota once again provided nine Ospreys to Iowa. Bill Fraundorf with ALLETE's environmental wing was able to conduct an aerial survey to target nests with multiple chicks in an area near Deerwood, Minnesota north of Mille Lac. ALLETE linemen

displayed exemplary work as they set about their mission of climbing transmission line structures to secure birds. It was a challenging year, as a late spring caused a temporary delay in nesting around the smaller lakes due to the lakes remaining frozen late into May. Osprey young from nests near MilleLac were noticeably more mature due to an earlier nesting cycle. However, with diligence and persistence, nine young were translocated to Iowa.

The Ospreys were released at three sites around the state. Kay Neumann and Saving Our Avian Resources staff placed two Minnesota Osprey young at White Rock Conservancy. In addition, three young were released at Swan Lake in Carroll Co. by the Carroll County Conservation Board staff. At Mud Lake in Dubuque, the Dubuque CCB and University of Dubuque volunteers released four Minnesota young. A summary of Iowa nesting pairs follows:

- There were five wild nesting pairs at Lake Macbride area. A pair at a site off Scales Bend Road were believed to have relocated from Coralville Reservoir, and produced three young. Staff at the Lake were unable to confirm band numbers on the adults
- There is a new nest near the Solon High School parking lot.
- There is a nesting pair just south of Sioux City near Sergeant Bluffs in Woodbury Co. However, nest material was removed by cell phone tower staff and nesting was unsuccessful, according to Jerry Von Ehwegen. Thanks to nest platform efforts by Woodbury County Conservation Board and Woodbury REC, three platforms were placed near the active nests.
- At the Duane Arnold Plant, a pair from Wickiup Hill in Linn Co. produced two young.
- According to Rich Pope, there were two young fledged from a farm site south of Sloan in Monona Co.
- A site at Lake Macbride had three young. One of adults has a purple band.
- At Jester Park in Polk County, two young were produced from a pair at campground number six.
- A site at Sugar Bottom has one young. Female is unbanded and male is unconfirmed.
- The pair at Walnut Woods built sizable nest in 2009 and produced two young.

*(continued)*



## Ospreys, continued from page 8

- A new nest was active one mile east of Big Creek. Nest-building was noted throughout the summer, creating hope for the future for this nesting pair.
- A new nesting pair on a 300 ft. cell phone tower in western Dallas County near Jordan Creek Mall fledged one young.
- At Don Williams, Boone CCB reported two young.
- A new nest at Lower Gar fledged two young.
- A pair at Evansdale was unsuccessful.
- A pair on Coralville had one young.
- A second Linn Co. nest south of Palo fledged two young. A possible third nesting pair is in area.
- At Spirit Lake a pair nested near the Nature Center release site. Three young fledged.
- At Annett Nature Center, Warren CCB naturalist Missy Smith reported a pair nest-building, but they did not proceed to nesting.
- In Cedar Falls, a pair returned to a successful nest site upon an iwireless cell phone tower. Last year's nest had been removed, but the pair still produced two young.



Photo: Don Poggensee

During spring migration 12 ospreys were congregating at Sand Lake south of Iowa City on the Iowa River. Two nesting platforms are scheduled to be installed this autumn. Since 1997, 291 Ospreys have been released at twelve sites. Since 2003, 134 wild Ospreys have been produced at 80 successful nests. There have been twelve sites that have released Ospreys around the state. Since this success is largely due to the dedication of volunteers, the Wildlife Diversity Program would like to produce a list of all the people that have assisted in the Osprey work around Iowa. If you volunteered or know of individuals that have assisted in this historic effort, please forward your name to [Pat.Schlarbaum@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:Pat.Schlarbaum@dnr.iowa.gov). It is our plan for the number of successful nesting Ospreys to keep trending upwards and this list will be a reflection of that growth.

-Pat Schlarbaum,  
WDP Technician

### Don't Forget about the Chickadee Check-off!

**Look for the Contribution line on your State tax form or ask your tax preparer.**

For more information about the Check-off,  
contact Stephanie Shepherd,  
(515) 432-2823 ext. 102

[Stephanie.Shepherd@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:Stephanie.Shepherd@dnr.iowa.gov)



## Meet the New WDP AmeriCorps Members

Matt Stephenson will be assisting Katy Reeder with the revisions to the Iowa Wildlife Action Plan. Matt was born and raised in Iowa and has lived in Ames for the last 12 years. He graduated from ISU with a B.A. in Animal Ecology in 2010. During college he interned for the USFWS at Valentine NWR in the Nebraska Sandhills. After graduation Matt completed three seasons with the MSIM program, working out of Boone, Tama, and Polk City.



Matt is actively involved in a Medieval Combat club at ISU and serves on the Membership Committee for the Iowa Ornithologists' Union. He also volunteers for USGS Frog and Toad Surveys as well as a Breeding Bird Survey route. He enjoys traveling around Iowa and the US camping and hiking with his wife and son. He is excited to continue working with the Wildlife Diversity Program and working with Iowa's wildlife!

Julia Dale began the WDP Assistant position in October. She will be assisting with the creation of Bird Conservation Area brochures, the WDP newsletter, and various bird and wildlife surveys.

Julia was born and raised in Albuquerque, New Mexico. She received a B.S. in Biology and Psychology in 2012 from Graceland University. She then spent a summer working in White River National Forest in Colorado studying Bighorn Sheep and Northern Goshawks. Prior to this position, Julia was part of the 2013 MSIM team at Port Louisa National Wildlife Refuge.

Julia spends much of her time birding, and she also enjoys backpacking, paddling, and skiing. She is excited to join the WDP team and looks forward to being able to further the goals of the program in the next year.



Brent Rutter is the new Inventory, Monitoring, and Survey Research Assistant for the Iowa Multiple Species Inventory and Monitoring project this fall. He began his work with the MISIM program in April 2013 and worked through the fall as the team's mammalogist and herpetologist. Brent graduated from Lincoln Memorial University in Tennessee, majoring in Wildlife and Fisheries Management. His senior project looked at the age distribution of the *Eurycea cirrigera* or southern two-lined salamander.

Brent enjoys the outdoors, specifically fishing. He grew up in Illinois, forty-five minutes outside of Chicago. He enjoys sports and outdoor activities such as basketball, hiking, and herping.

Emily Kiefer graduated from Iowa State University in December 2012 with a Bachelor's degree in Forestry. In her new position, she will be assisting with the Volunteer Wildlife Monitoring Program. She will be working with volunteers performing various types of surveys throughout the state including Frog and Toad call surveys and Bald Eagle nesting surveys.

Emily is looking forward to working with volunteers and everything else she will be involved with this year!



## News From the Frog Pond

As is often the case, this column will be about funding for wildlife diversity within the state of Iowa, specifically, the Iowa DNR. It's almost tax season again and you will notice we are promoting the Fish & Wildlife Fund (or as it is commonly known, the "Chickadee Check-off"). Funding for the Chickadee Check-off has been in place since 1982 and is one of the primary means of funding for the Wildlife Diversity Program. These funds support salary, vehicle, equipment, and supply costs (just to name a few) for our day-to-day operations and programs. Those



operations and programs include running the Volunteer Wildlife Monitoring Program, which trains Iowans on how to monitor Frogs and Toads, Colonial Waterbird Rookeries, and Bald Eagle nests. Those critical data are summarized to enable us to track those species. The Check-off helps support the Osprey and Prairie Chicken reintroduction programs by providing for staff time and travel. Staff time and some travel for our Outreach events such as the Bald Eagle Days (listed on the last page of this newsletter), along with Pelican Fest and Prairie Chicken Day are funded by the Check-off. Staff time to determine appropriate boundaries for the Bird Conservation Areas and develop informational materials for each BCA is also sustained by the Check-off. Almost everything reported within these newsletters, at least the stories about what our Program is doing, is supported to some extent by the Chickadee Check-off.

So, how is the Check-off doing? Well, in the last 30 years, only 4 years saw \$200,000 or more. The year it debuted brought the most contributions at about \$230,000. Preliminary information for 2012 suggests that 8,045 Iowans donated \$132,962. If every tax return had donated \$1, the Chickadee Check-off would have brought in \$1,504,777 last year. So why have donations dropped and why don't more people donate? One possibility may be that fewer Iowans do their own taxes these days and the tax forms are longer than they were in 1982. In 1982, the long tax form had the Check-off option on line 28. In 2012, it is on line 58. Today, the Chickadee Check-off is called the Fish & Wildlife Fund or the Fish/Wildlife Fund on the tax forms. If you wish to contribute, you may need to remind your tax preparer both up-front and prior to the forms being submitted about the Check-off!

- Karen Kinkead,  
WDP Coordinator

## Where Have All My Feeder Birds Gone?

Each fall, the Wildlife Diversity Program office receives inquiries from people wondering why their backyard feeders are suddenly bare. While people expect migrants to vacate the area, it can be surprising to suddenly see a dramatic drop-off in the number of Cardinals, Chickadees, and even House Sparrows at a usually crowded feeder.

A number of factors can be responsible for this phenomenon. During the fall, recently harvested fields may provide a valuable food resource for birds, and some species flock up to exploit this feast. A few resident species are actually partial or short-distance migrants, and many move in response to local food availability. Perhaps the most well known examples are the waxwings, who will wander widely searching for berries. Without territories to defend and dependent young to hold them down, birds are free to go where the best source of food is.

To keep your feeders busy throughout the year, make sure that they are always full and clean, and ensure that there is plenty of seed available if you plan on leaving town. If you nevertheless notice a lull in your feeder population, snowfall should bring them back to your yard.

-Julia Dale,  
WDP Assistant



## Last Look



This blue racer, *Coluber constrictor foxii*, was found by the Dubuque MSIM crew this summer. This subspecies of the Eastern Racer can be found throughout the Upper Midwest, though it is listed as endangered in Canada.

### A Publication of the



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## Events Calendar

### 2014 Bald Eagle Days Events

#### Clinton; January 4

815/259-3628

#### Quad Cities; January 11-12

309/794-5338

#### Ottumwa; Jan. 11

641- 684-4303 or

[www.wapellocountytrails.com](http://www.wapellocountytrails.com)

#### Dubuque; January 18

563/556-4372 or 563/582-0881

#### Keokuk; January 17-19

1-800-383-1219

#### Muscatine; January 25

563-263-7913

#### Coralville; Feb. 8

319-338-3543 ext. 6308

#### Gray's Lake, Des Moines; Feb. 14

515-237-1386

#### Effigy Mounds; February 22

563-873-3491

#### Saylorville; February 23

515-276-4656

#### O'Brien County; March 1

712-295-7200

#### Sioux Rapids; Mar. 22

712-296-4920 or 712-295-7200

To find out more about the Wildlife Diversity Program or to retrieve archived WDP Newsletters, visit our website:

[www.iowadnr.gov/Environment/](http://www.iowadnr.gov/Environment/)

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[NonGameWildlife.aspx](http://www.iowadnr.gov/Environment/NonGameWildlife.aspx)